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# The Place of Narrative in the Study and Practice of Adult Development

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*Come travel with me across boundaries—  
Across walls, rivers, lines, fences,  
Race, culture, gender, creed.  
We will not destroy the boundaries,  
But we will not let them hold us back;  
We will touch and see and hear,  
And maybe, we will know more of one another  
Than we have ever known before.*

*Mary Elizabeth Moore (1988b)*

## Introduction

Adult development is not a separate discipline, but rather an area of study that is informed by several disciplines, particularly psychology, sociology, anthropology, philosophy, and theology. In turn, adult development informs practice in many different fields including that of professional and organizational development in higher education.

In the study and practice of adult development, we need to acknowledge tensions created by differing perspectives and research methods valued in the various informing disciplines. We also need to consider individual and group differences on a range of factors including culture, race, gender, age, cohort, religious preference, learning style, career path, family patterns, socio-economic status, health, and personality. We are called to open our-

selves to hear the various viewpoints which intersect when adult life is examined from a cross-disciplinary and multi-faceted perspective.

This article explores the place of narrative or storytelling in the study and practice of adult development. Can storytelling help us see and understand boundaries within and between disciplines, individuals, groups? Is narrative a tool that can help us work and live with others in a wide range of settings?

This theme will first be examined by looking at narrative within some of the disciplines informing adult development, and then by exploring links between narrative and shifts occurring in ways of knowing in the social sciences. Following this, I describe my own response to the use of narrative, particularly biography and autobiography, within a higher education graduate course on adult development. The final section considers some of the emerging literature on the use of narrative methods in faculty development and other adult education activities.

## **Narrative in Several Disciplines**

Howard, a cross-cultural psychologist, points out that a growing number of narrative (or storytelling) psychologists are suggesting that as individuals we make sense or meaning of our existence through the concept of life as a developing story (1991). He includes a quote from Mair (1988) that captures the belief that story is central to individual development:

We inhabit the great stories of our culture. We live through stories. We are lived by the stories of our race and place. It is this enveloping and constituting function of stories that is especially important to sense more fully. We are, each of us, locations where the stories of our place and time become partially tellable (p. 127).

Howard quotes Polkinghorne (1988) as making a similar point: "We make our existence into a whole by understanding it as an expression of a single and developing story" (p. 150). He also quotes McAdams (1985): "My central proposition is that identity is a life story which individuals begin constructing, consciously or unconsciously, in late adolescence. As such, identities may be understood in terms directly relevant to stories" (pp. 57-58).

Howard, acknowledging the considerable overlap between the two, compares anthropology, which tends to focus on large differences between cultural groups, with cross-cultural psychology, which highlights the importance of studying the ways that cultural differences influence individuals. Howard argues that we are raised in a wide variety of cultural subgroups,

including race, socioeconomic status, gender, religious preference, and political belief system and that "The subjective culture of each of us is strongly influenced by the degree of contact we have with people and institutions that focus on (or see the world in terms of) their own subcultural perspectives" (Howard, 1991, p. 192). He sees cultural differences as being rooted in the preferred stories of different ethnic, class, racial, gender, and cultural groups and sees these subcultural stories as reflecting the boundaries that exist between different groups of people.

Moore, an educator and process theologian, believes that stories can help foster individual development by helping people see and feel the reality of life on the other side of various boundaries. She proposes that:

Stories are an invitation to cross the boundaries of our worlds into the worlds of other people with their cultural and religious traditions. Stories are an invitation to cross the boundaries of the present into the past or future. They are an invitation to cross the boundaries into our own depths and into mystery. Stories carry us across these boundaries and into wholeness of life (Moore, 1988b, p. 1).

In her literature search, Moore was struck by the relative absence of reflections on narrative as a method in modern educational theory even though narrative was often mentioned in surveys of teaching strategies. She draws two conclusions about this dearth of writing. First, she wonders if it has been relatively easy to look at narrative separately as a teaching strategy without looking at the larger questions surrounding its theory and practice. In addition, she proposes that most teaching and learning theories are based on research in modern psychology, which has not had a major focus on complex forms of communication, but rather on cause and effect questions primarily looking at one or two carefully selected variables at a time (Moore, 1988a, p. 250).

However, Moore (1988a) did find a number of themes related to narrative within the broad literature of educational theory, philosophy, and theology. She describes these themes as following:

1. Imagination is being revalued as an important ingredient in education.
2. Narratives are a very important source of imagination.
3. Narrative is a source of human consciousness and social critique.
4. Story is a form of indirect communication that conveys truths which cannot be communicated directly.

5. Stories have the power to form and transform the world (pp. 250-253).

In addition to summarizing these five themes, Moore (1988a) also identifies three assumptions about learning she found in the work she reviewed:

1. *Human beings are imaginative creatures*—capable of imagination and in need of it. . . . Imagination opens the way for persons to gain perspective on their own lives, to perceive the world of another person or culture, and to envision alternate possibilities for life on the earth.
2. *Persons learn through stories*. . . . Story stirs imagination, and it also points to realities not easily communicated in conceptual forms.
3. *Social learning takes place through stories*, so that cultural beliefs and values and patterns of action are actually formed and transformed through storytelling (p. 253).

In summary, Howard shows that narrative has a central place in some aspects of anthropology and cross-cultural psychology. Moore finds little specific literature on narrative method within education, but considerable related material within process philosophy, theology, and broad educational theory. Through the lenses of different disciplines, both authors suggest that the concept of story does indeed have rich possibilities for understanding and assisting the development of individuals on their various life journeys. They propose that story provides us not only with a methodological tool for understanding the meanings adults give to their lives, but with a transformational tool for helping individuals experience vicariously the realities of people living across boundaries in other places, times, and circumstances.

## Shifts in Ways of Knowing in the Social Sciences

To explore the place of narrative within the study of adult development, we can look at some of the research tensions and debates occurring in disciplines linked with adult development theory and practice. This section begins with an overview of Lincoln's (1988) article, *Trouble in the Land*, which examines the "paradigm shift" debate in the social sciences. This is followed by discussions and illustrations of these shifts in the work of Howard (1991), Palmer (1987, 1990), Clinchy (1990), and Moore (1988a).

Lincoln's argument that a paradigm revolution is happening is based on a review of literature in about a dozen different disciplines showing a move away from conventional logical positivist inquiry. Lincoln stresses that there

are different arguments given by different groups within different disciplines for replacing the logical positivist approach with new research approaches. In order to understand the various corrective proposals, she suggests that we need to recognize the different ways that the problem is being framed.

Lincoln suggests that there are at least four ways that the old paradigm is described as inadequate. These can be summarized as follows:

1. *The impoverished debate.* This debate could be characterized as occurring at the methods level with an argument for an inclusion of qualitative as well as quantitative methods in social science inquiry.
2. *The exclusion debate.* This debate is deeper than a call for a balance of methods. For example, it critiques conventional inquiry as having a male gendered bias, especially in research closely related to gender issues.
3. *The exception debate.* This debate opposes attempts of conventional inquiry to converge on a single reality. Instead, this critique calls for a constructivist view of reality.
4. *The whole paradigm debate.* Here the criticism is directed at the axioms or belief systems of logical positivism as being inappropriate for inquiry in the human behavioral sciences.

Lincoln builds extensively on the work of Schwartz and Ogilvy (1979) who reviewed academic disciplines and charted an "emergent pattern" on seven different dimensions of change. Schwartz and Ogilvy (1979, pp. 13-15) list the shifts they see occurring:

1. From *simple to complex* realities.
2. From *hierarchic to heterarchic* concepts of order. (The idea of a chain of command has given way to systems that are not pyramidal.)
3. From *mechanical toward holographic* metaphors.
4. From *determinacy toward indeterminacy*. (Ambiguity about the future is a condition of nature.)
5. From *linear to mutual causality*. (Factors may interact in ways that they evolve and change together making cause and effect meaningless.)
6. From *assembly to morphogenesis*. (There is a sense of order emerging from disorder in systems significant for their diversity, openness, complexity, mutual causality, and indeterminacy.)

7. From *objective toward perspective*. (Where we look from affects what we see, and any one focus gives only a partial result. Therefore no single discipline ever gives a complete picture.)

Using this description of the changes that Schwartz and Ogilvy found occurring in the academic disciplines, and her own review of the research literature, Lincoln summarizes the variety, extent, and complexity of the paradigm debate in selected disciplines. Following are illustrations from psychology and sociology.

Lincoln found that the argument in psychology ranged widely, and included a call for more qualitative methods, more inquiry in natural settings, as well as a call from some quarters for a complete paradigm shift. She also reminds us that there are two disciplines of scientific psychology: the positivist tradition, and one growing out of phenomenology. As psychology is the basis for much of the learning theory we use in education, shifts in the ways of knowing in psychology will likely have a major influence on future directions in educational research.

Lincoln states that sociology has drawn from anthropology from its beginnings and therefore has not undergone the same struggle for inclusion of qualitative methods that some disciplines have experienced. Lincoln suggests, however, that "two currents flow against each other: the first from the qualitative methodologists who see understanding meaning as the key to understanding human groups, and the second which enjoys the broad grasp of movement by means of demographic, cliometric, and/or quantitative studies" (Lincoln, 1988, p. 89).

Howard (1991) connects story or narrative with what Lincoln and others refer to as a "paradigm shift" within the academic disciplines. His article's opening section is entitled, "Epistemological Background," and in it, he argues that "All across the intellectual landscape, the forces of objectivism are yielding to the entreaties of constructivist thought" (p. 187). Howard suggests that science can be understood as a form of storytelling and story refinement, as can nonscientific forms of knowing. He proposes that both forms of knowing share a common genus (narrative or storytelling), but represent different species, being evaluated by different sets of criteria. "The moral is: Different types of stories best serve different functions" (p. 190).

The work of Parker Palmer, a sociologist and educator, is also important to consider when looking at storytelling and shifts in the ways of knowing in the academic disciplines. Palmer (1990) describes how "the academy of higher education has been dominated by an objectivist image of knowing which keeps the knower at arm's length from the known so that 'subjective' biases will not distort our knowledge" (p. 12). He suggests, however, that the

call for a new epistemology is not the overthrow of objectivity, analysis, and experimentation. Rather, we must pay attention to the ways these objective tools can be effectively counterbalanced. Palmer also explores a theme he calls the "autobiographical connection" in teaching and learning in the academy. He states that:

Objectivism regards autobiography as biased and parochial and hopes to replace it with "universal truth," as told through a particular discipline. The challenge of racial and cultural minorities to higher education comes in part from their refusal to accept the validity of a "universal" tale that does not honor the particularities of their own stories. . . . If there is a valid super-story, it will emerge only as the academy becomes what it is meant to be, but is not yet: a place of true pluralism where many stories can be told and heard in concert (1990, p. 13).

Another important resource in the emerging literature on story and adult development is *Women's Ways of Knowing*. This book is based on a collaborative, qualitative research project in which the interviewers listened to the stories of women talking about their experiences in particular teaching/learning contexts. Blythe Clinchy (1990), one of the coauthors, places their research methodology and findings within the "emerging paradigm" in the social sciences.

As we read and reread the interview transcripts, we also tried to stay close to the women's own images. Over and over the women spoke of their growth in terms of gaining a voice. . . . These women saw the themes of voice and self and mind as closely intertwined . . . we revised our definitions of the epistemological positions to emphasize the *source* of knowledge and truth, rather than the *nature* of knowledge and truth (p. 58).

In this book the coauthors delineate two types of procedural knowing: separate and connected. Clinchy describes each of them in her article:

The heart of separate knowing is detachment. The separate knower holds herself aloof from the object she is trying to analyze. . . . She follows certain rules or procedures to insure that her judgments are unbiased. Separate knowing often takes the form of an adversarial proceeding . . . and the primary mode of discourse is the argument (1990, pp. 60-62).

Connected knowers are not dispassionate, unbiased observers; . . . they try to get right inside it, to form an intimate attachment to it. This imaginative attachment is at the heart of connected knowing. She doesn't try to evaluate the perspective she is examining, she tries to understand it. She does not ask whether it is right; she asks what it means. . . . She is looking for the



story behind the idea. The voice of separate knowing is argument; the voice of connected knowing is a narrative voice (1990, pp. 63-64).

Unlike Howard, Palmer, or Clinchy, Moore does not state directly that a shift is occurring within the mode of inquiry in the social sciences. However, her article is grounded in the postmodern approaches of process philosophy and education as influenced by the work of Alfred North Whitehead and others. Moore describes some of the assumptions underlying the organic philosophers' view of education and they sound very similar to the emerging paradigm described by Schwartz and Ogilvy (1979), Howard (1991), and Lincoln (1988):

When one begins theorizing about education from an organic, web-like view of the world, one begins with assumptions that the world is thoroughly interconnected, and one naturally seeks modes of communication which are themselves organic and web-like. When one begins theorizing about education from an organic view of time, one begins with assumptions that the present is intimately related with the past and future, and one naturally seeks modes of communication in which the dynamic process of life can be viewed through time. Narrative communication is a natural, and it invites a closer look (Moore, 1988a, p. 249).

Howard, Palmer, Clinchy, and Moore all propose that narrative methods are important modes of inquiry. They also suggest that narrative can provide pathways to individual empowerment—a concept central to adult development. For example, when individual learners hear the stories of how knowledge in the various disciplines is constructed, and when they sense they are invited into the discourse, they expand the ways they can imagine participating in the community of scholars (Palmer, 1990). Through the hearing and telling of personal stories, they are also encouraged to imagine new ways of participating in the construction of their own lives. Narrative appears to hold the promise of being a rich resource for both the study and practice of adult development.

## **Narrative Methods: A Personal Response**

How are narrative methods such as biography and autobiography useful for the understanding of adult development? I examine this question by discussing my response as a learner to the use of narrative in a graduate course on adult development. Examples of both biography and autobiography were included within the reading material for several of the topics we studied, and

one of our texts described possible uses of personal documents in the study of adult development (Wrightsmann, 1988).

As I reflect on the course, I notice that of the wide range of readings we had, it is the narrative material I most easily recall. In addition to several of the articles, I found three longer narratives particularly significant: Coles' (1970) *Erikson: The Growth of His Work*, Coles' (1989) *The Call of Stories*, and Bateson's (1990) *Composing a Life*.

In reflecting on the place of narrative within this course on adult development, I begin with Erikson, who expanded the work of Freud into an eight-stage socio-cultural model of adult development. Erikson's model was developed largely through ethnographic research, on some occasions collaboratively conducted with anthropologists, combined with personal reflection. Erikson elaborated his theories in two psychobiographies—one on Martin Luther, and one on Mahatma Gandhi. When I read Erikson's own life story, as portrayed in the biography by Robert Coles, I had an even greater appreciation of Erikson's extensive and important contribution to the study of adult development.

Levinson's conceptual framework was influenced by both Erikson and Jung, and was developed in more detail from extensive interviews with 40 men. Levinson (1978) describes his research method as "biographical interviewing. The primary task, as we informed our subjects at the start, was to construct the story of a man's life. Interviewer and interviewee joined collaboratively in this work" (p. 14). From analyzing the case material, Levinson and his research team proposed that adult lives are structured with oscillating periods of stability and transition with the likelihood of a difficult mid-life transition period around age forty. He refers to these stages as seasons, with each one distinct from those before and after it, but with much in common with them as well. He sees these different seasons as occurring at very predictable age markers. Although Levinson put considerable effort into his participant selection process, we need to be careful about generalizing too broadly from his sample as his findings may be descriptive of a particular cohort. Even with limitations in Levinson's research, his work, along with that of Erikson and Jung, illustrates how narrative is an important part of adult development research.

Bateson's *Composing a Life* has a different research methodology from that used by either Erikson or Levinson. Erikson's narratives are based on the lives of two major historical figures, and Levinson's narratives are anonymous. Bateson's work, however, is a combination of autobiography and biography, based on extensive interviews as well as personal experiences with four other women—Ellen Bassuk, Johnetta Cole, Alice D'Entremont,

and Joan Erikson. Her book describes her own life along with the lives of these four close associates, women who have woven relationship and achievement into their lives, throughout their lives.

The chapter headings give a sense of the adult life as a journey as Bateson invites us to consider themes such as Opening to the World, Multiple Lives, Vicissitudes of Commitments, Fits and Starts, and Enriching the Earth. She shows how each of the women in this book has faced discontinuities, life interruptions, and conflicting priorities, but has found a way to improvise or compose a next step response anyway. In fact, the interruptions and difficulties have often become sources of growth. She proposes that by looking in detail at the particular life-stories of several women who have adapted to the complexities of living, there may be inspiration for men as well as for women who find themselves in rapidly changing circumstances rather than stable life environments.

*The Call of Stories* is a description of Coles' use of stories in his teaching and medical practice. However, the book is much more than that; it is actually an autobiography, organized around the central place that stories and storytelling have in his work as a teacher and a doctor. In this book, Coles gives many specific illustrations of how the lives of students and patients have been personally and deeply touched through the reading and sharing of stories.

In summary, the course readings that I recall the most clearly, and that personally touched me the most deeply, were narratives in the form of nonfiction. Why did the impact of these narratives appear to be stronger and longer lasting on me than that of the non-narrative texts? I believe I made a personal connection with the authors and persons in the narratives. Like the students and patients in Coles' *Call of Stories* and the connected learners in *Women's Ways of Knowing*, I feel that I let the narratives enter me and that I allowed myself to be affected by them.

Biographies and autobiographies can serve as text material for the study of adult development. Reading the narratives of others can also serve as a stimulus for the reader's own growth and development. But there is another way to look at the place of narrative within adult development, and that is in engaging the adult learner in telling and writing one's own autobiographical material.

This form of narrative was also included as part of this graduate course on adult development. In the first class, we shared our various metaphors for adult development, along with our own first memories of feeling like an adult. In our first written assignment, we examined our own sense of adult development through a response to a piece of literature of significance to us. The major assignments were structured so that our own puzzles and interests in

adult development could guide our outside reading and writing in the course. Although these activities formed part of the structure of the course, I believe that this use of narrative was more an “implicit” rather than “explicit” aspect of the curriculum (Eisner, 1979).

## Narrative Methods in Adult Development Activities

In my search for literature on the use of narrative in postsecondary faculty development activities, the key source I found directly referring to the use of story was an article by Peter Frederick (1990). He advocates the use of collegial storytelling as an effective and powerful faculty development activity. Based on a brief review of relevant literature and his own experience in leading workshops for faculty, he proposes that through storytelling, we can “achieve deeper insights into who we are as professional scholars and teachers . . . which enables us better to help our students learn” (p. 7). This article includes a very detailed and useful description of a format for telling teaching stories within a collegial community setting. Frederick concludes by suggesting that the use of autobiographical stories can occur not only in faculty development settings, but in higher education classrooms as well.

In the same publication, Frederick’s article is sandwiched between two others, one by Steve Golin and the other by Patricia Cross. I propose that the programs described in these two articles are also strongly connected with the use of narrative methods. The article by Golin (1990) describes the Master Faculty Program introduced into the New Jersey Higher Education system in 1987 by Joseph Katz based on his two decades of research on student growth and faculty development. As this article gives only a brief description of this process of peer collaboration and student interviewing, readers are directed to the following two publications for greater exploration of this in-depth process of faculty development.

In *Turning Professors into Teachers*, Katz and Henry (1988) describe the results of their work with major projects at fifteen higher education institutions. Their work does not directly highlight the use of story, but central to their work is the importance of regular interviewing of students (listening to their voices) about their learning (their stories) in the specific classes of the participating faculty members. This is combined with peer conversations about the information from the class visits as well as from the student interviews. This book gives a detailed description of their inquiry-based model and includes reflective essays by three faculty with companion pieces by Joe Katz on his experience as a colleague observer. There are also two

interview transcripts with faculty (a biologist and a political scientist). Both faculty claim that one of their key learnings from the project was hearing from their students about the positive benefits of the use of stories within their teaching. In Morrissey (1990), the essays by participants in the New Jersey program give a sense of the new relationships that emerged not only between the peer partners but between faculty and students as well. This book provides an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the power of having one's stories really heard whether one is a student or a faculty member.

In the article, "Teachers as Scholars," Cross (1990) presents the argument that teaching should and will move to being one of the more scholarly and intellectual activities of college faculty and that this move will be partially stimulated by increasingly diverse student populations. Her proposal of the classroom as a learning laboratory (classroom research model) is one where the learners talk and write about their own learning in response to specific questions about various teaching/learning activities. Through regular investigation into these stories of successful and unsuccessful student learning within their own classrooms, faculty and graduate teaching assistants can transform their understanding of teaching and learning. The benefits include an expansion of their abilities to work with the diversity of learners participating in postsecondary classrooms today.

There is also a growing literature on process education that includes direct reference to the power of story in education. The groups primarily addressed in this literature are children and youth. However, there is also some material on the use of narrative in teacher education. Eisner, writing in the foreword of the book, *Teachers as Curriculum Planners: Narratives of Experience* (Connelly and Clandinin, 1988), says that one of the most important contributions of this book is their use of teacher narratives. He writes:

The metaphors by which teachers live, the way they construe their work, and the stories they recount, tell us more profoundly about what is going on in their lives as professionals than any measured behavior is likely to reveal. But to use such data one must have courage. Narratives are regarded as "soft," and soft data do not inspire confidence among the tough-minded. Narratives are often riddled with metaphor, with individual cadences that convey personal meaning, and with those expressive features that do not lend themselves well to truth tests . . . . The use of narratives, and the epistemological frameworks through which these narratives embody and convey meaning, not only provides an important way to think about curriculum and teaching, but also is vital to understanding what goes on at school (pp. x-xi).

This book describes a number of reflective tools, based in narrative methodology, that are starting to be used in teacher pre-service and in-service activities, including journal-keeping, autobiography, picturing, document analysis, storytelling, letter writing (dialogue between professionals), teacher interviews, and participant observation. Many of these approaches are also now used within faculty development programs. However, as pointed out earlier, there is descriptive information on specific narrative teaching strategies, but a dearth of research on the broader issues concerning the use of narrative methods (Moore, 1988a).

Two other recent books highlight the importance of fostering self-reflection and critical inquiry in adult learning experiences. Smith and Associates (1990) explore the metacognitive process of "learning to learn" from many different perspectives. The chapter by Stephen Brookfield includes the analysis of written autobiographies as one of three phenomenological methods for inquiry in the area of learning to learn. The other two methods, interviewing and describing critical incidents, are also narrative-related strategies. Mezirow and Associates (1990) include several chapters that focus on narrative techniques such as critical incidents, life histories, journal writing, and the emancipatory potential of literature. Teaching strategies to assist adult learners develop their self-reflective and critical inquiry capabilities have linkages with narrative approaches and with the "emerging paradigm" literature identified by Lincoln (1988).

As I reflect on the place of autobiographical methods within adult education—in faculty development programs as well as in courses taught by postsecondary faculty—I find a quote from Palmer (1990) particularly provocative. He says:

Of course, everyone's story is, in part, parochial and biased. But when we deal with that fact by ignoring autobiography, we create educated monsters who know much about the world's external workings but little about their inner selves. The authentically educated person is one who can both embrace and transcend the particularity of his or her story because it has been triangulated many times from the standpoints of other stories, other disciplines—a process that enriches the disciplines as well (pp. 13-14).

## Conclusion

The place of narrative in adult development research and practice has been examined in this article from several different perspectives. Recognizing that adult development is a field of study informed by a number of disciplines, the first step was to look for literature on narrative in at least some of these disciplines. Although the survey was not exhaustive, it was found

that narrative emerged as an important concept in cross-cultural psychology, in some approaches within anthropology, in process philosophy, and in the broader literature of educational theory. The second section of the article examined literature, proposing that a shift is occurring in the ways of knowing in the social sciences—including a shift towards more narrative-based research approaches, such as life history and in-depth interviewing. Although not reviewed here, literature is also becoming available on ways to improve the quality of narrative research (Anderson, 1981; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Runyan, 1988).

In the second half of the paper, there was a shift of focus from narrative as research methodology towards narrative as educational methodology. This was first addressed through my own personal reflections on the use of narrative, particularly biography and autobiography, in both the content and process of a graduate course on adult development. The final section of the paper described some of the current literature on the use of story in faculty development and teacher education, and included a reference to emerging literature using narrative methods to assist adult learners develop self-reflective and critical inquiry capabilities.

In summary, narrative is now a well established methodology within adult development research. However, even though the use of storytelling has a long and rich tradition in many cultures, it has not been explicitly acknowledged as a powerful or even legitimate teaching/learning resource in higher education. But the tide is beginning to turn. Narrative methods are starting to gain recognition for their educational and developmental value, just as they have gained recognition for their value in social science research.

It seems that narrative *can* help those who study adult development to understand better the boundaries that divide not only disciplines, but that divide individuals and groups as well. Narrative can also help researchers and learners recognize and sometimes cross boundaries such as those of time, place, culture, and circumstance. And the ability to cross boundaries is becoming more and more important as our higher educational institutions become increasingly diverse in terms of the people studying and working within them. Through my reading and reflections on biography and autobiography, I have developed a growing interest in, and enthusiasm for, the value of narrative methods, not only within research about adult development, but within educational programs for adults, including developmental activities for the educators themselves.

As interest in adult development as well as in narrative grows, adult educators and professional development practitioners will likely be in greater communication with colleagues in a wide variety of disciplines, not only the

social sciences but also literature, film, and communication, to learn more about their perspectives on the nature and applications of narrative. And as narrative methods become more of an explicit rather than implicit part of the educational conversation, greater research attention will likely be given to understanding the specific strengths and limitations of their use.

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